

Andrew Jackson to Nathan Davidson, August 25, 1804, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO N. DAVIDSON.¹

¹ This letter shows Jackson's method of carrying on a controversy in his early life. It also contains the clearest available evidence that his trading firm bought and sold negroes. This letter should be read in connection with Jackson and Hutchings to Boggs and Davidson, July 31, 1804.

Hunters Hill, August 25, 1804

Sir, Your letter dated New orleans the 14th. of July last, addressed to me came duly to hand, and should have recd. earlier attention had Mr. Hutchings been at home—from the tenor of that letter relative to circumstances that took place at New orleans, made it necessary that I should see Mr. H. before I proceeded to answer. Mr. H. is now with me, and his letter herewith inclosed will be a sufficient answer as to any misinformation stated by you that I had recd. from him relative to those facts stated by me in mine of the 24th of June. I must remark, that I never doubted of the correctness of Mr. H. statement to me, I have always found him correct in his statements, but Sir finding in your letter positive deniels of your own declaritions of your agreement with me relative to the time credit should be entered Stothart and Bell for the neat proceeds of our cotton shipped last year, and a total perversion of my letter wrote you from Gallatine on my way to Philidelphia—these Sir strengthen my belief that Mr. H. is correct in his present statement. I am pleased with the mode you have adopted in addressing me alone, as it will afford an opportunity of closing the difference between us in our own names, without implicating the feelings of your partner, against whom I have no ground of complaint. you will recollect that the

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ground of Complaint stated in my letter against you, was, your declarations of friendship that you would render Mr. H, when at New orleans, and in your conduct towards him whilst there: a total deviation therefrom, nay worse a breach of contract, and overreaching him under the confidence of promised friendship.

There is nothing contained in your letter that has removed those impressions but has added insult to injury, by telling me I am mistaken in facts which you know to be true, and which I had from your information, which shall be duly notic'd. you state Sir "that I am mistaken as to the advantage accruing to the shipping Merchant from shipments of this kind and so forth" you also state "as to interest being stopped on debts due by the shippers, it is more than ever you knew of" nor do you believe it to be the case and so forth". if Sir I am Mistaken it arises out of information recd. from you, and as you have hazarded a denial of this position in my letter I have thought proper to call on Major Tatom for his recollection of your statement on this point as well as others, as you appear to be in the habit of denying information given by yourself, and denying your agreements, which must have been under the impression, that these things alone rested between us and not susceptible of proof, I inclose his letter to which I refer you to refresh your recollection on this point as well as others hereafter to be touched on, from which you will find that you have erred instead of me; and that from your own statement shippers of cotton derive the benefit stated in my letter, and that he has understood you in the same way I did. You go on to observe, "that if even this was the case, this shipment of ours would be but a sorry assistance." sorry as it might be, it appears, it has had its influence with you, in causing you to deviate from your agreement with Mr. H, and added to this another sorry advantage, has been a sufficient inducement, with all your boasted wealth and independence to make you deviate from truth deny your agreement, and violate your promise of friendship, to procure a sorry advantage that you could not have obtained, unless under the confidence that was reposed in you under your professions of friendship and offered services, but Sir at this time we were not advised, that your proffered friendship was on commission. I have now noted it in your letter and will hereafter view it in

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this way, I have said that another sorry advantage has been a sufficient inducement with you to deviate from truth, and deny your agreement. to shew this, it is only necessary, to quote your sentence, read it, it stands thus “that I am also mistaken as to Interest charged on the shipment last year,” you say “you recollect the enquiry I made of you when at Nashville, that you stated that interest on # should cease on the shipment being made and # when the sales were made, *on which you loose* , but choose to allow in Stothart and Bells Instance as the greater part was a payment to yourselves” (you ought to have said the whole of ours was a payment to yourselves) but to the point. I stated in my letter, and repeat again Sir that you did expressly state to me and agree that the proceeds of our cotton shipped by you last year and which was to be applied to the credit of Stothart and Bell should be entered to their credit, on the day the shipment was made and on the mount of the Neat proceeds no interest should be calculated, and I now state on this statement *thus* we made our settlement with Stothart and Bell at that time. this Sir you have denied which shews how regardless you are of truth, when your interest comes in competition with it. this deliniates your charactar and proves that when interest is at stake you will hazard a deniel of truth to avoid a compliance with your word or agreement. I must here Sir refer you to Major Tatoms letter and the inclosed certificate of Mr. Robert Stothart (both men of respectability) to awaken in you a love for truth. what sensations (after you telling me I mistake facts) must the reading of those inspire in a breast susceptible of delicate feelings.

When the amount of the inducement is viewed, what confidence can or will be reposed in a man who boast of fortune and thus violate his word for a mere pittance, *even worse than a sorry* assistance. It is not worth while to trace you farther, your whole letter displays you devoid of that candour that from your standing as a Merchant, I had a right to calculate on. I shall only make a few observations on another part of your letter and leave you for the present, *we shall meet* . you are pleased to observe, that you always understood that our Cotton was to be sent to you untill you recei'd my letter of the 28th of February as I was on my way to Philidelphia, permit me here to ask a few simple questions. did I not state

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to you at my own house, and at Nashville that Mr. H, would proceed with our Cotton, did you not offer your polite and friendly aid to him when he reached New orleans, did I not consult with you on the subject of bringing groceries from there, and state to you, that Mr. H. would take funds with him to lay out in the way, and did you not offer your friendly aid to him on this point. you also state that in this letter I advised that Mr H, had sufficient funds in his hands, to pay all our debts and so forth and requested you to receive your claim at New orleans and so forth. if it did it stated more than I ever thought, than I ever intended or what the copy says it states, and for this reason I hope you will forward it to me and keep a copy yourself That I may be convinced that my pen has expressed a thing that I had uniformly stated to you would not be the case, that the failure of Cotton crops had put it out of our power to make full payments. that letter from what appears in substance stated, that Mr. H. would be furnished with a just account of our debts, that he would sell if possible at new orleans, and that I wished you (as I had before stated to you in person) to receive your proportion of your debt at New orleans, that Mr. H, would carry on negroes to exchange for groceries, and wishing you to make a sale of them before he came if you could, that a fellow answering the description you wanted was bought, but I was fearfull he would not suit you as he had once left his master and so forth but as to stating that he had sufficient funds with him to pay all our debts cannot be correct, was not this the reason that I gave you for not acceding to the proposals of Messrs. Clifford because we would not be able to make full payments this season and it would not be doing equal justice to our creditors, but this in your letter you are also pleased to deny, but like the rest *susceptable of proof* . I did Sir often state the offer of Mr. C. to you and my reasons for declining, but Sir I shall leave you for the present, barely stating that I expect you will order credit to be entered for the neat proceeds of our cotton shipped last year, to Stothart and Bell (if it is not done) at the time it was shipped, or I will be compelled from principle of justice to the publick, and to ourselves, to publish your agreement, then your denial, and certificates to prove its existance as stated by me. do this and retract your assertion that I have Mistaken facts mentioned in your letter, and I will try to harbour the charitable oppinion, that hereafter you will be carefull in making promises, but when made, stedfast

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in performing them. I am sorry Sir that I have cause to alter that good opinion I once had of you, but Sir the testimony is strong, and candour has compelled me to state to you the sentiments of a mature reflection on the evidence before me, I have no doubt but we shall have the pleasure of a meeting in the course of the present fall, when we can have a full investigation of all matters and things which has been the subject of this letter. untill then I am Sir

yr. etc., etc.